

# Marshal Ogarkov comes out fighting on strategy

**MARSHAL** Nikolai Ogarkov, mysteriously dismissed as Chief of the Soviet General Staff in September, has returned to public view with an unrepentantly thorough exposition of his military philosophy.

In a short book that went on sale in Moscow last week, the Marshal, possibly the cleverest Soviet soldier of his generation, quotes Marx, Engels and Lenin in support of his argument that the technology and methods of modern warfare are changing so fast that a slow and uncreative military establishment risks being left perilously behind.

The book repeats the substance of warnings made before he was dismissed, including the dangers of ignoring entirely new weapons technologies.

The 90 pages of 'History Teaches Vigilance' makes two main points about US-Soviet rivalry. Ogarkov argues, as he has for several years, that the number of strategic nuclear weapons is so great that 'you don't have to be a military specialist to see that their further accumulation . . . becomes simply pointless.'

This suggests that Ogarkov was not demoted for opposing the new Geneva arms talks. He played an important part in the first strategic arms limitation talks. The evidence is, he believes it pointless to make yet more redundant rockets and



favours lower numbers for both sides.

The book's chief purpose, though, seems to be to drum the inevitability of change in military affairs in to people he thinks may forget. He calls upon the classic tools of Marxist-Leninist thought—the dialectic, the struggle of opposites—to show that every new weapon and strategy brings forth a newer weapon and strategy to counter it.

In a survey of war from the Middle Ages, he points out the triumph of defensive weapons in World War I and their overcoming by new offensive weapons in World War II. He concludes that 'a deep, and, in the full sense, revolutionary upheaval in military affairs continues in our age.' He also returns to his old theme of how new technology has revolutionised conventional weapons and the imminence of completely new weapons technologies, presumably lasers, particle beams and the like.

Ogarkov does not address 'Star Wars' but it comes within the logic of his argument. He writes that the appearance of new means of offence 'always and inevitably' leads to the creation of counter-measures and 'in the final end, to the

devising of new means of conducting battles, operations and war as a whole.'

According to Ogarkov's interpretation of the military dialectic, Star Wars or some thing like it seems inevitable. He does not openly draw this conclusion though, which would be utterly heretical in Moscow.

Why has the Marshal been allowed to repeat his views? He has never fallen into complete disgrace or anything like it. Last December, he published in a military journal an article on World War II which included his thoughts on the pointlessness of more nuclear missiles. He signed the obituary of Defence Minister Ustinov just before Christmas, and was ranked after the Deputy Ministers of Defence (until last September he had been First Deputy Minister) but before the commanders of military districts.

Official leaks say he is now in charge of the western 'theatre of military operations' facing NATO's central forces. This is part of a command system he devised when Chief of Staff to cope with high-tech warfare and which would only be fully activated if war broke out.

No one doubts that Ogarkov

ran into trouble with the Politburo but theories are various. Diplomats were told he had behaved in an 'un-Party-like' way. He is certainly known for his arrogance. He seems to fancy himself as heir of Marshal Tukhachevsky, the brilliant soldier-strategist who foresaw the tactics and technology of World War II before Stalin had him killed in 1937. Ogarkov often quotes, as a cautionary tale, Tukhachevsky's creation of armoured strike forces in the early 1930s and Stalin's foolish disbandment of them.

Ogarkov is said to be unpopular with some colleagues. According to a usually well-informed source, the new First Deputy Defence Minister and then commander of ground forces, Marshal Petrov, threatened to resign when Ogarkov, pursuing his high-tech ideas, wanted to disband Petrov's infantry as a separate arm. It is also rumoured that the late President Chernenko did not like him and that Defence Minister Ustinov, ill and knowing he would soon die, engineered Ogarkov's removal from the General Staff to destroy his claim to take over the Defence Ministry.

Whatever the truth, Gorbachov's election as party leader may offer Ogarkov a new chance. He and Gorbachov both seem obsessed with the fear of a technologically-backward Soviet Union.